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Sent: Fri 6/15/2012 2:32:43 PM
Subject: Fw: FYI - EnergyWire: WYOMING: Regulator resigns after comment that 'greed' motivates critics in Pavillion

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FYI -- From this morning's EnergyWire . . .

WYOMING:

Regulator resigns after comment that 'greed' motivates critics in Pavillion

Ellen M. Gilmer, E&E reporter

Published: Friday, June 15, 2012

Wyoming oil and gas official Tom Doll submitted his resignation yesterday. The announcement comes a week after Doll made stinging remarks about hydraulic fracturing critics during a presentation to state energy regulators in Vancouver, British Columbia.

At the center of the issue is the Pavillion oil field in Wyoming, where residents have complained of suspected water contamination from drilling. A preliminary report from U.S. EPA found some fracking fluids in deep monitoring wells, but none in drinking water.

Doll, director of the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, said at a meeting of the Interstate

Oil and Gas Compact Commission last week that the residents were only complaining in hopes of cashing in (EnergyWire, June 6).

"I really believe greed is driving a lot of this," he said on June 5. "I think they're just looking to be compensated."

Doll also said he and other state officials had already decided EPA's investigation was flawed and that the agency itself had contaminated the deep wells during the drilling process.

Republican Gov. Matt Mead's office issued a statement the next day condemning the remarks, and Doll then apologized, insisting he would be objective during the ongoing study. The governor, who was traveling in China at the time, met with Doll in Cheyenne this Wednesday, and Doll turned in his letter of resignation yesterday.

Renny MacKay, spokesman for the governor, would not say definitively that the move was connected to last week's remarks, but he did not indicate otherwise. Doll did not return messages seeking comment.

"I appreciate Tom's work and his depth of knowledge on oil and gas matters," said Mead in a statement last night. "He has extensive experience in the energy field and has demonstrated a commitment to the Oil and Gas Commission."

John Fenton, chairman of the Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens, said in an interview last night that he was relieved to see Doll go.

"He had his mind made up," Fenton said. "His loyalties were laid with the oil and gas industry, not the state of Wyoming."

Fenton said he hoped Doll's replacement would not have ties to the oil and gas industry. "Now that we've got Tom out of there, who was obviously pretty one-sided in his feelings, maybe we can have a more evenhanded approach," he said.

Doll's resignation is effective July 3. MacKay said officials were still determining who would fill the role at that point.

Doll was appointed in 2009 by former Gov. Dave Freudenthal (D) and took the lead on extensive chemical disclosure rules for fracking that were once hailed by environmentalists as the best in the nation. But the oil and gas commission was sued earlier this year for the number of trade secret exemptions it approved (EnergyWire, March 27).

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